



News

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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DSHS SAYS IT WILL ASK FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FOR FLEXIBILITY, CHANGES IN STATE MEDICAID PROGRAM

OLYMPIA, Wash. – State Department of Social and Health Services Secretary Dennis Braddock today outlined a series of key Medicaid changes the state is drafting as a waiver request for the federal government.

The changes would include small premiums and co-payments for some Medicaid recipients with income above the poverty level. The reforms are aimed at giving the state control over many of the spiraling cost drivers that have driven up the cost of both private and public health care in recent years.

Topic: Medicaid reform

- The Medicaid changes proposed in the state's medical assistance programs will be outlined in a special forum in Burien on September 14.
- Community Conversations around the state will offer additional discussion opportunities.
- A new DSHS Web page will allow the public to offer suggestions and comments. Address of the page is:

<http://maa.dshs.wa.gov/medwaiver/>

"I believe that we are headed for disaster unless we adjust the system so we can manage and control these costs and take trends into account," Braddock said. "The current system leads only one direction, and ultimately will price thousands of Washington residents out of needed health care."

Braddock said he was seeking a full airing of the proposal before it is submitted to the federal government and has scheduled a discussion on the waiver on Friday, September 14, in the Seattle area.

The morning-long event will be held at Highline School District headquarters, 15675 Ambaum Blvd., in Burien. The meeting will include representatives of Washington physicians, hospitals, the Children's Alliance and the Washington Health Foundation.

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In addition, DSHS is establishing a web page for the waiver proposal, and DSHS representatives are scheduling smaller discussions and presentations around the state.

Braddock stressed that the plan would not assess premiums or additional costs for any Medicaid recipients at or below the federal poverty level.

“It’s important to understand that we are trying to protect the most vulnerable populations and to carry through on the commitment the Legislature has given medical assistance recipients over the years. Without the flexibility of the waiver, we are going to be unable to deal with the changing face of Medicaid, and our only option will be to cut back our coverage and abandon that commitment,” he said.

Key changes in the plan to reform Medicaid are:

- Adopt reasonable premiums and co-payments for the clients in Medicaid optional programs with incomes above the poverty level. (Total cost of premiums and co-pays must not exceed 5 percent of a client’s or client family’s income.
- Adopt more flexible different benefit designs for Medicaid optional programs, while continuing to emphasize primary and preventive care.
- Impose enrollment caps or waiting lists for Medicaid optional and State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) programs when that move would allow the state to stay within appropriated funds.
- Simplify program eligibility to reduce administrative burden and add consistency across the state’s subsidized health programs.
- Use the state’s unspent SCHIP allotment funds and use them to cover existing children’s programs or to supplement coverage of parents enrolled in the Basic Health program. Currently, the state must return those funds at the end of each year.

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EDITOR’S NOTE: A special forum on Medicaid reform will be held from **9 a.m. to noon on Friday, September 14, at the Highline School District Boardroom, 15675 Ambaum Blvd. SW, in Burien.** All interested stakeholders are invited to attend the meeting, which is being sponsored by the Children’s Alliance,;Children’s Hospital, Seattle; American Academy of Pediatrics, Washington chapter; Washington State Hospital Association, and the Washington State Health Foundation. The event is free and open to the public.

Below are Community Conversations around the state being sponsored by DSHS. Community Conversations, which began earlier this year, were an effort to increase public involvement in the agency’s effort to streamline existing practices, stretch current resources, and plan ahead. For more information about Community Conversations, visit the Web page at <https://www2.wa.gov/dshs/maa/comconv/>

Sept. 13, Wenatchee, 5-8 p.m., Housing Authority Community Bldg, 1120 9th St.
Sept. 14, Tri-Cities, 1-4 p.m., Comm. Action Center, 720 W Court St. (Pasco)
Sept. 14, Yakima, 6-9 p.m., EPIC -Castlevale, 2901 Castlevale Road
Sept. 17, Seattle Metro South, Time and place to be announced
Sept. 18, Seattle Metro North, Time and place to be announced

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Sept. 19, Fife, Time and place to be announced

Sept. 21, Port Angeles, 6-9 p.m., Vern Burton Center, 308 E. 4th

Sept. 25, Shoreline, Time and place to be announced